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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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MAY 13 1980

TO: The Deputy Secretary

THRU: P - Mr. David Newsom

FROM: ARA - William G. Bowdler

PRC Meeting on Argentina
May 14, 1980, at 10:30 A.M.

I. INTRODUCTION

You have agreed to chair a PRC meeting on U.S.-Argentine relations, including the implications of expanding Argentine-Soviet cooperation.

Aside from the question of how best to obtain Argentine cooperation on grains in 1980-81, there are several major issues.

The primary issues are:

1. What is the scope and significance of Argentine-Soviet cooperation?

-- Does expanding Argentine-Soviet cooperation in the economic, political and nuclear area (and the parallel Soviet probe toward Brazil) pose a significant threat to U.S. interests, short and long-term?

-- What are Argentine motives? Can we, if we want to, steer clear of or arrest this trend?

2. What is the best way to pursue U.S. human rights objectives under current circumstances?

-- How should we pursue our human rights interests, taking into account our various other interests and current human rights conditions in Argentina? Have conditions improved significantly?

-- What should be our approach in the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) and other UN bodies? How should we deal with the Argentine concern that current moves in the UNHRC are largely directed at Argentina, and that it must ensure Soviet cooperation and support to forestall public censure and condemnation in the UN.

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With concurrence of: John G. Clegg obtained 12 - 14 - 16

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The papers prepared for the PRC meeting argue that these two issues are partially linked: i.e. pressure on human rights in UN fora is an important reason for expanding political cooperation between Argentina and the Soviet Union. The papers also show that disagreement exists with regard to the scope and significance of the human rights improvements that have occurred in Argentina, especially over the past year.

The secondary issues are:

3. At what level should we pursue military-to-military contact and cooperation, given strategic, political and human rights interests?

-- Are there strategic and political reasons to seek modification of the Humphrey-Kennedy Amendment? Should we streamline and simplify current review procedures on Commerce-validated licenses?

-- Is there a special case to be made for permitting the sale of training?

4. What needs to be done in the nuclear area?

II. THE OPTIONS

The Issues paper advances three options for U.S. policy toward Argentina (See pp. 10-11 for a discussion of the rationale of these options):

Option A (Favored by HA): Continue strong concentration on human rights:

We would maintain a cool and correct posture until the human rights situation shows substantial further progress, making clear that we are prepared to improve relations when and to the degree that fundamental human rights problems are solved. Military relations would be kept to a minimum; political relations should be cool and correct.

Option B (Favored by ARA, PM, S/P, EB): Continue the current level of effort for more balance in the treatment of our interests in Argentina:

We would continue the present efforts to strengthen

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working relations with the GOA, principally through stepped-up political consultations, but also through some increase in cooperation and increased military contact. We would continue to stress the importance of human rights, but would establish priorities in terms of benefits to Argentine society and attainability. We would seek further specific human rights improvements through dialogue in the improved atmosphere, but would maintain our present policy on votes in the IFIs and the restrictions on military supplies. However, we would seek to reopen the sale of military training. Our general approach, especially in the UNHRC, would seek to avoid pushing Argentina into cooperation with the Soviet Union.

Option C (Possibly favored by DOD): Move a step further toward normal relations:

We would seek further to strengthen working relations with the GOA by lifting the restrictions on Commerce licenses and by initiating a move to lift the Humphrey-Kennedy Amendment restrictions on the military supply relationship. We would stress to the GOA that human rights remain important to us and would continue our abstention on IFI loans. But we would more explicitly and unconditionally reaffirm General Goodpaster's general assurances that we were not interested in seeking the GOA's public censure at the 1980 UNCHR meeting, and would not support future moves for censure in UN or OAS fora in view of current and prospective progress.

III. BUREAU POSITIONS

A. ARA, PM, S/P, ER

We favor Option "B". In our view, the U.S. approach basically should be a political one. We should pursue U.S. interests toward Argentina in a balanced fashion, in line with the Goodpaster, Hodges and Smith missions. We should recognize that the state of U.S. relations plays a significant, although not conclusive, role in the scope and nature of Argentina's relations with the Soviet Union. Human rights remain of great concern, but we should recognize that there has been considerable progress in regard to the most critical human rights areas. We should be concerned over the expanding Argentine-Soviet relationship, but not alarmed. An expanding political relationship, however, would clearly be a serious setback for the U.S., and this development

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we must seek to prevent.

In essence our approach toward Argentina since the Goodpaster mission, this option has already achieved significant results while maintaining pressure for human rights improvements. As a result of our recent initiatives, the GOA:

-- decided against participation in the Moscow Summer Olympics;

-- provided substantial help to the U.S. in blocking the Vietnam Food Aid project;

-- decided it will accept 300 Cuban refugees from the United States and Peru;

-- was the first to publicly support the U.S. in opposing moving the WHO regional office from Alexandria;

-- recalled its ambassador from Tehran (while continuing economic ties); and

-- agreed to set informal limits on its grains exports to the Soviet Union.

As part of this approach, we believe the Administration should pursue the following specific courses of action:

Political Consultations.

We should continue the process of high-level political consultations. (Ambassador Bowdler would plan to visit Buenos Aires later in the year, assuming conditions are propitious.)

Grains.

Within the context of better relations, the U.S. should seek tighter Argentine restrictions on grain exports to the U.S.S.R. without offering any specific quid pro quo. We do not believe we will be able to offer Argentina sufficient inducements to make a large reduction in their grain exports to the Soviets, but we may be able to persuade them to accept moderate reductions and publicly announce a ceiling on these exports in the context of improving bilateral relations, as envisioned in Option B, and overall cooperation among the grain exporting nations. One important gesture in this direction would be to sign the proposed

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U.S.-Argentine agreement on agricultural research cooperation now (rather than delaying until there are further human rights improvements).

Human Rights.

-- Recognize that the new UNHRC Working Group of experts on disappearances has become an issue of central concern to Argentine diplomacy, that a full accounting of the fate of the disappeared lies in the future, and that Argentine concern over moves it sees as aimed at its condemnation in UN fora is a principal impetus for political cooperation with the Soviets. Without sacrificing principle, USUN and future delegations to the UNHRC should maintain a lower profile on Argentine issues, letting others take the lead where possible, and closely consult with the Department whenever Argentine issues arise.

-- In the OAS, we should support a general endorsement of the IAHR's report on Argentina and call on the GOA to give the report serious consideration. As far as we know, the GOA has not brought itself to consider accepting such an endorsement, and there will be a need for close consultations.

-- We should seek to establish a confidential, high-level dialogue with President Videla's successor to pursue specific human rights improvements, including a return to judicial processes and safeguards in dealing with "subversion"; a more specific timetable for the release, trial, or exile of the remaining PEN prisoners; an end to the use of torture during the interrogation of detainees; and a definitive end to disappearances. (While the Presidential succession is being debated within the regime -- until September -- we see only limited possibility of carrying forward an effective dialogue in this area.)

-- On the other hand, we should not make accounting for the disappeared a central requirement for the improvement of our bilateral relations, nor should we insist on an immediate return to democracy; it will take years for the present government to lay the groundwork for the establishment of a pluralistic, democratic society.

Military Relations

-- We should continue to hold off a final decision

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whether Argentine Army Chief of Staff Vaquero should be invited to visit the United States at this time. Preliminary soundings by Ambassador Castro indicate that senior Argentine military leaders (i.e., Viola and Galtieri) consider that a visit prior to the selection next September of a successor to President Videla would be premature. From our own perspective, such a visit should be examined in the light of other developments, including the possibility of a visit to Argentina for political discussions by Assistant Secretary Bowdler. In addition, we would like to look to the nature of our contacts, if any, with the selected successor to Videla before his taking office in March 1981.

-- We should pursue other avenues of military consultations, such as responding favorably to Argentina's suggestion that we hold consultations, perhaps with Brazil (it is questionable the GOB will agree), focused on Soviet activities in the South Atlantic. We should not lift the military supply restrictions imposed by Humphrey-Kennedy; there is neither strategic need nor sufficient progress on human rights to do so at this time.

-- However, we should seek ways to renew military training, the sale of which is prohibited by the Humphrey-Kennedy Amendment. Such training would influence the outlook of the next generation of Argentine military leaders.

-- We should undertake an inter-agency review of the Commerce-validated licensing procedures, with a view toward simplifying the review procedure and reducing the scope of the restrictions now in effect.

Nuclear Relations.

-- We should solve the pending safeguards issue on the basis of what is required by U.S. law, recognizing that Argentine interest in cooperation beyond the supply of research fuel is modest.

-- Building on Argentina's recent promises to the FRG and Switzerland, we should continue our dialogue with Argentina's senior leaders on global and regional proliferation concerns as a way to encourage ratification of Tlatelolco.

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Option "A" would likely reduce Argentine cooperation with the U.S. on international and bilateral issues. Argentina would probably abandon efforts to continue cooperation on grains, and seek closer political cooperation with the Soviet Union to counter the increased pressure on human rights. Argentina might also reconsider Soviet offers of military equipment and training and an expansion of reciprocal Argentine-Soviet military visits. A comprehensive fishing agreement, possibly including the provision of Argentine port facilities to Soviet ships and crews, might also be concluded. Furthermore, in reaction to the renewed, exclusive focus on human rights, the GOA would likely dig in its heels on further human rights improvements.

Option "C" would provide the maximum incentive for Argentine cooperation with the U.S. on East-West issues, but at a considerable cost to U.S. human rights policies. The GOA and other Western governments would conclude that the U.S. has abandoned its human rights policy toward Argentina, and the U.S. would be harshly criticized by human rights groups in the U.S., Argentina, and abroad. Human rights violations might possibly increase. Moreover, the extent of Argentine support of the U.S. would still be limited by the GOA desire to protect its profitable trade relationship with the Soviets.

B. HA Position

Our human rights policy is being fundamentally tested in the case of Argentina. In bilateral relations with the U.S. and other democratic governments, Argentina's well documented human rights violations have been the subject of intensive concern. The Argentine Government is sensitive to its poor international image, and international pressure has been a major factor in those improvements which have occurred in the past year. Even the anticipation of a critical report by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission had a positive effect on the human rights conduct of the GOA.

To adopt Option B would give a signal, not only to Argentina but to the rest of the world, that our human rights policy is indeed inconsistent. In particular, it would set back the significant progress made in the recent UN Human Rights Commission where we worked to help establish a mechanism to deal with disappearances. The situation of disappeareds in Argentina provided a major impetus for UNHRC action.

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It can be argued that several of the GOA's steps, which are attributed to recent U.S. initiatives, were the result of a standard of conduct we should expect from that Government regardless of whether we adopted option A or B. The GOA has been playing the Soviet card: at the UNHRC meeting in Geneva, in its grain sales policy, and last week at the San Jose meeting on the Cuban refugee situation. Whether the Argentine Government seeks closer political ties with the Soviet Union will depend more on domestic political considerations than on outside human rights pressure. The annex to the attached discussion paper on the evolution of Argentine-Soviet relations tends to support the argument that the GOA will not rush into a closer relationship with the Soviet Union, rather than the contrary position taken by ARA.

The Argentine Government has supported Soviet and Cuban positions as a naked expedient in seeking allies to deflect human rights condemnation in the international fora. The USG should not fall into the trap of making decisions on the premise that our human rights policy is driving Argentina into the Soviet orbit. This premise implies that a policy of concern for human rights weakens democratic institutions -- a logic that does not withstand scrutiny. Option A has produced improvements in Argentina. To move away from this policy, when significant human rights deprivations continue and when thousands of disappeareds remain unaccounted for, would strengthen the GOA's belief that the Soviet card tactics are indeed powerful.

C. Congressional Relations

H sees serious hurdles in obtaining any modification of the Humphrey-Kennedy Amendment and will be sending you a separate memo on this subject.

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